DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 142 329 PS 009 495

AUTHOR Krzysztoszek, Zofia
TITLE The System of Education and Care for the Young Child: Research Problems.
INSTITUTION Organisation Mondiale Pour l'Education Prescolaire, Warsaw (Poland).
PUB DATE Aug 77
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual World Congress of OMEP (15th, Warsaw, Poland, August 23-26, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Child Development; *Early Childhood Education; *Educational Philosophy; *Educational Planning; *Foreign Countries; *Kindergarten
IDENTIFIERS *Poland; World Congress on Preschool Education

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the educational and psychological problems which make it necessary to consider kindergarten as the first stage in the uniform system of education and upbringing in Poland. Ways in which these problems stimulate research and affect the educational praxis of higher school levels are discussed. (JMB)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

POLSKI KOMITET
ŚWIATOWEJ ORGANIZACJI
WYCHOWANIA PRZEDSZKOLNEGO

ORGANISATION MONDIALE POUR
L'EDUCATION PRÉSCOLAIRE

O M E P

Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci
Zarząd Główny

XV ŚWIATOWY KONGRES OMEP Warszawa 23-26 VIII.1977 r.

ED142329

ZOFIA KRZYSZTOSZEK

PS 009495

THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION AND CARE FOR THE YOUNG CHILD - RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Warszawa 1977

ZOFIA KRZYSZTOSZEK

THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION AND CARE FOR THE YOUNG CHILD - RESEARCH PROBLEMS

W a r s a w 1977

Prof. Zofia Krzysztoszek
Institute for Educational
Research
Warsaw, Poland

THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION AND CARE FOR THE YOUNG CHILD
RESEARCH PROBLEMS

At the beginning I feel I ought to remind you of the basic assumption which determines guidelines for studies and research projects on kindergarten children. The assumption states that the kindergarten is the first stage in the uniform system of upbringing and education in the Polish People's Republic.

The statement requires a more detailed analysis. Education and care in the whole period proceding school entrance is provided mainly for children of working mothers. The functioning of creches and kindergartens is planned according to the working hours of various institutions in which mothers are employed and according to the increasing amount of work required in summer in the rural regions.

At present, however, the kindergarten education aims at embracing the whole population of preschool children, starting from the oldest ones, i.e. from the six-year-olds.

Promotion of kindergarten education is connected with the place it takes and will take in the structure of the Polish schooling as well as with the educational tasks it is to

fulfil.

The function of creches and kindergartens has for a long time now been twofold as they provided both care and education for the child. In the kindergarten the educational function prevails which is naturally caused by the child's growth and his getting ready for school instruction.

At present the kindergarten is followed by compulsory eight--year primary school which in turn is the basis for full and non-full general and vocational secondary schooling.

The reform of the Polish school system now in course leads to the increase in the kindergarten's significance.

The whole young generation of our country will soon be embraced by the compulsory ten-year secondary school. A proper preparation of each child for schooling so that all of his potentials and abilities could be revealed and developed becomes the crucial educational problem of our times.

The necessity to consider the kindergarten as the first stage in the uniform educational system springs from two basic reasons, namely the social and the psychological. The former points to the fact that each child of a democratic country irrespective of the environmental, professional and national status of his parents should be provided optimum conditions for a harmonious, all-round development through the equal school start. The latter is connected with the sifnificance of personality formation in early childhood and with the

great possibilities of the educational influence in this particular period.

I will not discuss the social premises here. They determine a number of organizational solutions worked out by the state and the society for the purposes of care for mother and child, health services and educational institutions geared to preschool children.

All of these solutions make us aware of the significance of the psychological premises without which even the best and the wisest regulations and organizational solutions will not ensure the true connotation of the beautiful words "the child's benefit".

That is why I will now concentrate on the educational and psychological problems that form a reason for considering the kindergarten the first stage in the uniform system of education and upbringing. The more, that this particular set of problems inspires and stimulates both the research activity and the educational praxis of higher school levels.

At the same time I will limit the discussion of these problems to those in solving which I participate directly or indirectly.

I would like to begin with a well-known issue which in spite of its evident significance is still one of the unsolved problems, i.e. with the acceleration of the contemporary child's

development. Educators agree that acceleration is a fact and that it should be accompanied by respective changes in instructional and educational activities. They know well enough that acceleration occurs during a considerable number of years in the life of the child and, although conspicuous in adolescence, it is the effect proceded by cumulative changes which are often difficult to notice and therefore require systematic observation from the earliest periods of the child's development. The problem is vital for the educational system as neglect of any developmental stage in the research procedure will make the solution unattainable.

Educators agree that definite developmental disharmonies tend to occur consisting in accelerated physiological and intellectual development accompanied by retarded or at least inhibited social and moral development. It is quite often that disharmonies are also noted within one area as happens in the case of component elements of the intellectual sphere, for instance, rapid increase in the scope of knowledge about the surrounding reality is usually found accompanied by a relatively low level of thinking skills.

Reasons for these phenomena are basically known. Television, cinema, radio, newspapers and adults' conversations provide a variety of information concerning life, society, national and international problems. But the increased scope of knowledge does not mean intensity or balance in the thinking process, nor does it automatically lead to a true understanding

of the surrounding reality. Moreover, it definitely does not mean the formation of social and moral attitudes that correspond to the knowledge so chaotically acquired.

Generally, one could say that acceleration characteristic of the young generation's development in the present-day is by no means correlated with the accelerated social development and sometimes even retards social maturation. Zbigniew Załuski, a popular Polish journalist, presents a whipping criticism of this phenomenon stating that the effect of the process is "a physical 18-year-old with the mentality of a 12-year-old". He also points to the increase in sexual capabilities and needs when "the moral consciousness and the inhibition system remain at the level of playing dolls and teddy-bears, at the level when the child destroys his teddy-bear to see what is inside and takes the doll's mechanism apart in order to find out why it persistently repeats "Ma".[1]

Backwardness in social maturation processes is reinforced by influential factors especially in the urban areas. The speed of the contemporary life which leads to the accelerated physiological and psychic development brings about social and economic requirements retarding independent and responsible life start of the young generation. Changes in the structure of professions call for a higher level of general education and better professional qualifications.

The schooling period for bigger and bigger numbers of the young people becomes much longer. In consequence the young

5

people precociously mature and feeling mature are not and cannot be treated accordingly to their ambitions.

One can alleviate the problem through lowering the school entering age. This is done by means of introducing elements of reading, writing and mathematics to the kindergarten curriculum. These are, however, elements of the formal training. Solutions of problems connected with the developmental disharmonies are approached through research on the nature and character of these phenomena and through the diagnosis of qualitative differences found among children from various professional environments.

This complex problem is being tackled with in the research carried out by doc. dr Barbara Wilgocka-Okoń on the children's school readiness. Research activities in this field are also initiated by a number of research centers in our country as merely manysided analyses and examinations of questions mentioned above will enable us to find optimum solutions with regard to the organization of the educational process, choice of forms and methods of work so that it becomes a fundamental basis for further stages of education for children and adolescents in our country.

Appropriate research procedures call for precise clarification of concepts which function as the point of departure. More and more of our researchers and educators do not any longer approve of the traditional personality concept divided into the intellectual, social and moral, aesthetic, and phys-

ical spheres to which respective fields of the educational activity are ascribed.

Though the traditional - as I call it - concept of personality stresses the global approach, the educational praxis faced narrow specialization as a consequence of such a division with activities geared to parts and never to the whole of the individual's life.

At present a group is increasing of researchers who consider personality an integrated structure of highly organized systems, namely the cognitive, emotional, motivational and functional which develop in a close contact with several life spheres, i.e. the economic and technical, social, natural and artistic.

This approach requires modifications in the division of the educational activity into spheres. Each set of activities deals with the arrangement and development of contacts between a particular life sphere and all the structural elements of the child's personality. The same approach sets forth a list of new research problems.

The first group of problems deals with the capabilities of intellectual, emotional and functional perception of the life spheres mentioned above on the part of various age groups of children.

So far we can state that it is the intellectual perception of the social phenomena that poses greatest problems for the

child. Learning the social phenomena requires a prerequisite understanding of laws, regularities and processes included in the social growth which is by no means easy and at a kindergarten level probably even impossible. Therefore, the educational curriculum for the kindergarten suggests such a presentation of the social life that would lead to ordering the global view of social problems and to the child's acquisition of basic moral concepts. Is it a satisfactory foundation for future intense educational influence at a higher school level? Or contrarily - isn't it to wide in scope? The question as well as many others have to be answered in the course of researches.

The second group of problems deals with the mutual relationship of the above mentioned types of the child's perception.

To give an example I can say that intensified educational work with the young child geared to providing him with ordered information on the social life with the slightest neglect of the emotional element leads to a uniform, sad and grey picture of the world. As researches reveal such a world in the eyes of the preschool child is the world of rigid organization, onesided simplification, duties and work no more than just obligatory, never connected with the joy of creative activity, difficult world where you "have to" but never "can". Let us now pass to the third group of research problems.

Here we can find questions concerning the type of values in-

cluded in various fields of life that should be focused on in the educational activity geared to the preschool child. Values created by the human being and values serving the human being best are both crucial for the educational system. For the last few years the problem of values has been tackled with by the Department of the Educational Axiology headed by doc. dr Czesław Herod.

The analysis of values significant for the state and the society is a source of the educational objectives for the whole of the educational system[2] and for each of its stages, the preschool stage included.

Concentrating the educational activity around values enables us to treat personality as an integrated whole. Each value significant for mankind should be understood, lived through and effected or - after having understood how precious it is for the individual and for the society - ought to be created again and again with the highest emotional commitment. Each of the structural elements of the human personality must be engaged in this activity and fully utilized. Therefore, choice of values becomes extremely important at each particular level of education and upbringing.

As far as the preschool educational stage is concerned, research on the problem of values is fairly advanced and will well serve higher school stages.

There also is the fourth group of problems. How to organize

the educational process so that danger is eliminated of applying merely the procedures of adaptation on the one hand and of fetishizing the spontaneous child's development on the other? This group of questions, closely connected with the former three, is - to my mind - of special significance.

The set of problems mentioned above is by no means new and recalls the controversy which engaged Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbert and Froebel. All of them discussed the discrepancy as between adults' requirements springing from the social demand and the children's needs, between compulsion which was thought to be indispensable in the initiation of the young man into the society and freedom of the educational process, between the rigid discipline and the self-dependent, spontaneous activity of the child.

In a general-theoretical sense the controversy has been overcome and the thesis of a spontaneous development from the inside had to be rejected and replaced by that pointing to the directional role of education which is never a rigid compulsion but a set of activities facilitating the creative self--realization of the individual.

The educational praxis, however, is abundant in particular, specific questions of a methodological and technical kind which need explanations and answers on the basis of adequate research projects.

The education of the young child must be - to a considerable

extent - a process adjusting the child to the life in the society. It has to be so, as the child's dependence on his environment is at that point very strong, imitation plays an important part in his growth and counteracting egocentrism and anomie call for special adaptive procedures. But if the process of adjustment becomes central and dominates all the others, undesirable consequences for the growth of the country will have to be expected. Progress in all the spheres of the social life requires new values and a higher quality of life and work. Thus, the next generation of people who will make all the important decisions must differ from the former ones in its creativity and efficiency.

People who are no more than adjusted bring about stagnation and regress and never progress which is both affirmation and negation. That is why the main educational guideline in our country is the postulate to educate the creative, active individual who not only fully understands the surrounding reality but can also transform and improve it. But not all of the teachers can do it as it is far easier to educate in an adjusting manner through manipulation and psychological training. Consequences of such educational procedures tend to show up fairly soon in the groups of older children and adolescents. There always are groups of the young people protesting against the lack of independence (not only formal) who do not want to live and think the way their fathers did and who want to shape their life according to their own reasons, concepts and feelings

But if we have not prepared them in the educational process to think rationally and objectively, to form concepts both beautiful and wise and cherish feelings that would motivate to overcome difficulties and barriers for the common good - no more than groups of resigned and contestating young people will be the product of education. Neither of them can be of any use for the country, while each creative personality will find tasks enabling his full self-realization in the Polish People's Republic.

Procedures of adaptation applied to kindergarten children are not subject to rapid validation. Partly, because in this period of life they are simply indispensable and partly because results are not immediate. They will be fully revealed in school and even later in the adult life and work.

Attention should be, therefore, given to the limitation of adaptation activities and subjecting them to the dominating educational influence which ensures conditions for revealing creativity, imagination and phantasy. This does not mean complete freedom of the child. The spontaneous development is an outdated concept, although it happens to appear in the educational praxis, especially in the home environment of the child. Efforts are, however, made to explain the nature of the educational process to parents in the course of special activities geared to spreading the pedagogical knowledge among adults.

The set of problems I have presented is in fact important for all the educational stages, in the kindergarten, however, it seems more specific and more conspicuous.

And this is what evidently shows the role of preschool in the uniform system of education and upbringing, the role which is not only initiating but also fundamental for the long process of personality formation in children and adolescents of our country.

---

[1] Z. Załuski, "Those clever precociously grown-up children". Argumenty 2, Warsaw, January 14, 1973, p. 10.

[2] The system of national education embraces all the conscious and goal-oriented educational influences of a school, out--of-school and postschool character.

PSB1/0 9 ss.ai.Nakotowska 16/80
Zam.675/77 nakład 200